



Montgomery County Council

From the Office of Council President Valerie Ervin November 18, 2011

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Council President Ervin Encourages Residents to Support Local Small Businesses on Saturday, Nov. 26

**Long-time Advocate for Local Businesses Supports
Small Business Saturday'**

ROCKVILLE, Md., November 18, 2011—Montgomery County Council President Valerie Ervin, one of the Council's strongest advocates for local, small businesses, is encouraging residents to patronize local, small businesses on Saturday, Nov. 26, in a show of support for the second annual national 'Small Business Saturday.'

November 26 has been designated as 2011 Small Business Saturday, a day to support the local businesses that create jobs, boost the economy and preserve neighborhoods around the country. Small Business Saturday (SBS) was created in 2010 by American Express in response to small business owners' most pressing need: creating more demand for their products and services.

"We know how important Black Friday is for many large retailers," said Council President Ervin. "On Small Business Saturday, I want to encourage residents to shop locally to generate neighborhood prosperity and to enhance the existing sense of community. During these challenging economic times, it is critical for all of us to do what we can to support our local businesses."

A total of 1.5 million Facebook users, 130 public and private organizations and 41 elected officials declared their support for SBS last year. More than 100,000 small businesses downloaded SBS marketing materials and 10,000 businesses signed up for free Facebook advertising. Participating small retailers reported a 28 percent increase in sales in 2010 on SBS when compared to the Saturday after Thanksgiving in 2009.

Council President Ervin has advocated for small businesses since she was first elected to the Council in 2006. She secured funding to support local businesses in the County through the creation of a Local First Program, which is a nationally recognized effort that emphasizes the importance of patronizing locally owned businesses and helps owners network and make collective purchases.

Last month, she asked the Council's Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy and Environment Committee to hold a worksession to review the County's Local Small Business Reserve program and take the first step toward extending the sunset date.

"Current law requires the director of the Department of General Services to report on the progress of the Local Small Business Reserve program by November 30 each year," Council President Ervin wrote in a memo to committee members. "I would like to request that the T&E Committee discuss potential improvements and the merits of extending the program at that worksession. While the program does not sunset until December 31, 2012, I believe we should act now to keep this important initiative going. Small businesses are a critical component of the County's economy. In these difficult times, it is more important than ever that Montgomery County remains committed to an environment that supports economic growth and job creation."

Council President Ervin has worked to moderate parking rates and hours in shopping areas where small businesses exist. She has been a strong supporter of the Wheaton Small Business Alliance, a merchants association that advocates for small business owners who might not otherwise join the Chamber of Commerce because of financial constraints.

Throughout the redevelopment of downtown Silver Spring, Council President Ervin has also looked to protect the area's established and new small business owners. She is a strong supporter of the Fenton Street Market and can often be spotted there on weekends.

"We have learned a lot of lessons in our redevelopment of downtown Silver Spring," she said. "One of the things we need to improve is our focus on promoting small homegrown businesses. This can be through campaigns like 'Think Local First' in Wheaton and Silver Spring or other partnership opportunities with Montgomery County. I believe that this will help publicize the diverse businesses that have helped to make Silver Spring great and will help our neighbors to patronize these businesses first for their every day needs."

Business owners such as Lene Tsegaye of Kefa Café in downtown Silver Spring, appreciates the Small Business Saturday campaign, saying, "When you shop small, you are building community, supporting the economy and making a stronger nation."

Aldofo Mendez, owner of the Cubanos Cuban restaurant in Silver Spring agreed. "Take your family and relatives visiting for the holidays to shop the small businesses in Silver Spring," he said. "Show them what an exciting place Silver Spring has become."

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